NEWS ANALYSIS #1-0928
RONALD J. DUNLAVEY

JUNE 11, 1976

THE ARAB LEAGUE AND LEBANON

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES THE ARAB LEAGUE'S DECISION TO SEND A JOINT SECURITY FORCE TO LEBANON:

VOICE: AT A MEETING HELD IN CAIRO THURSDAY THE ARAB LEAGUE MADE WHAT COULD BE A MOMENTOUS DECISION-- TO SEND WHAT WAS DESCRIBED AS A "SYMBOLICE" PEACEKEEPING FORCE TO LEBANON. IT IS TO BE MADE UP OF TROOPS FROM LIBYA, ALGERIA, SUDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA--AS WELL AS FROM SYRIA AND THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION. THE SYRIAN CONTINGENT, ACCORDING TO THE CAIRO ANNOUNCEMENT, IS TO BE NO LARGER THAN THOSE OF THE OTHER COUNTRIES. AND THE MISSION OF THE INTER-ARAB FORCE-- ACCORDING TO THE CAIRO ANNOUNCEMENT-- IS TO " REPLACE" THE LARGE SYRIAN FORCE NOW IN LEBANON AND TO RESTORE ORDER IN THE EMBATTLED COUNTRY.

AT THIS MOMENT IT IS NOT ENTIRELY CERTAIN HOW WIDESPREAD IS ARAB ACCEPTANCE OF THE LEAGUE'S PLAN. BUT ITS DECISION OBVIOUSLY MOVES THE LEBANON CRISIS INTO A NEW PHASE. IT IS ALSO A DECISION THAT IS LIKELY TO BE RECEIVED WITH MIXED FEELINGS BY THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CLOSELY FOLLOWING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON. ON THE ONE HAND, THE DECISION REPRESENTS A BROADENING OF INTERVENTION, SOMETHING THAT IS ALWAYS ACCOMPANIED BY AT LEAST A POTENTIAL RISK OF ESCALATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS A NATURAL RELUCTANCE TO DISCOURAGE ANY STEPS WHICH MIGHT END THE BLOODSHED AND GIVE THE LEBANESE A CHANCE TO WORK OUT A SETTLEMENT OF THEIR POLITICAL DIFFERENCES.

THESE MIXED FEELINGS WERE REFLECTED BY A STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN HERE IN WASHINGTON THURSDAY. "WE WELCOME EFFORTS WHICH HAVE A POSSIBILITY OF GAINING AN EFFECTIVE CEASEFIRE AND POLITICAL ACCOMODATION AMONG THE PARTIES IN LEBANON," HE SAID.

BUT, HE ADDED: " WE CONTINUE TO WARN THAT OUTSIDE MILITARY INTERVENTION CARRIES WITH IT THE RISK OF ESCALATING THE STRIFE IN LEBANON INTO A REGIONAL CONFLICT." HE DECLINED TO MAKE ANY COMMENT ON THE ARAB LEAGUE'S DECISION, POINTING OUT THAT WASHINGTON HAD NO INFORMATION ON HOW THE DECISION IS TO BE CARRIED OUT. AND HE ADDED: " WE JUDGE WHAT HAPPENS IN LEBANON ACCORDING TO WHETHER IT CONTRIBUTES TO OR MAKES MORE DIFFICULT AN EFFECTIVE CEASEFIRE AND POLITICAL ACCOMODATION AMONG THE PARTIES IN LEBANON THAT WILL PRESERVE THAT COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY, UNITY AND NATIONAL COHESION."

THE OUTCOME OF THE ARAB LEAGUE'S DECISION WILL BE CLOSELY WATCHED NOT ONLY IN WASHINGTON BUT IN OTHER CAPITALS AS WELL. IT HAS RAISED A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS, INCLUDING-- FOR EXAMPLE-- THE EXTENT OF THE SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL. WHAT MOST OBSERVERS REALIZE, HOWEVER, IS THAT OUTSIDERS CAN AT BEST PLAY A LIMITED ROLE, AND THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES WILL HAVE TO BE TACKLED BY THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. AS ONE CORRESPONDENT PUT IT: " FOREIGN TROOPS MAY BE ABLE TO QUELL THE WARFARE FOR AWHILE. BUT UNLESS THESE PROBLEMS ARE SETTLED BY THE LEBANESE THEMSELVES, VIOLENT OUTBURSTS ARE BOUND TO CONTINUE."

-0-